

# THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF  
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS  
(Section of the Library Association)

HON. EDITOR: FRANK M. GARDNER  
(Willesden Public Libraries)

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## The Library Assistant ANNOUNCEMENTS

IT was felt by the Council, at its meeting on 7th August, that the resignation of Mr. R. D. Hilton Smith from the Honorary Secretaryship should not be allowed to pass without some acknowledgment of the very great services he has rendered to the Association. A subscription list has therefore been opened for a presentation, and will remain open until 30th October. Subscriptions should be sent to Mr. A. R. Hewitt, Middle Temple Library, E.C.4, and will be duly acknowledged. We are sure that many members will welcome this opportunity to record their personal appreciation in material form.

Nominations for Officers and Council for 1936 must reach Mr. A. R. Hewitt, Middle Temple Library, E.C.4, by the first post on Wednesday, 18th September. Voting papers will be issued with the next issue of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

In the interregnum before the appointment of a new Hon. Secretary, Mr. Hewitt is combining the duties of Hon. Treasurer and Secretary, and all correspondence should be sent to him at the address given above.

A new contributor appears in this month's issue. Mr. Harold F. Brigham, Librarian of Louisville, U.S.A., is our new American correspondent, and we are proud to introduce someone whose contributions will, we think, become one of the most-looked-for items in English library journalism.

Our correspondence columns have been unusually bare of late, and in our more nightmareish moments we wonder if assistants are reading their own paper, or if 3,000 LIBRARY ASSISTANTS monthly lie buried in their envelopes. There must be many assistants with ideas which, if not meaty enough for an article, at least deserve a letter to the editor. Our younger readers, especially, seem extraordinarily inarticulate. Where is the rising generation?

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In common with his many friends, we congratulate Mr. T. E. Callander, Librarian of Finchley, author of "Valuations," and probably the most brilliant editor the LIBRARY ASSISTANT ever had, on his elevation to the Librarianship of Coulsdon and Purley.

The next meeting will be held at Chaucer House on Wednesday, 9th October, 1935, at 6.30 p.m. Mr. James Revie, F.L.A., of Birmingham Public Libraries, will address the meeting on the proposals for Amalgamation with the Library Association. As the subject is of vital importance, it is hoped that all members will be present.

The Inaugural Meeting of next session will be held on 8th January, 1936, when Mr. G. D. H. Cole has consented to address the meeting. Please note this date *now*.

It is hoped that a party of members will visit the Library Association Conference at Manchester on Wednesday, 11th September, 1935. The return fare from London will be 23s. The train will leave Euston at 8.45 a.m. and will return at 6.17 p.m. All members wishing to join the party must notify Mr. W. C. Pugsley, Branch Library, High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, not later than 4th September, 1935.

### LIBRARY ASSOCIATION EXAMINATIONS, MAY, 1935

*Elementary*.—334 Candidates sat, 141 Passed (1 with Merit).

*Intermediate, Part I*.—340 Candidates sat, 49 Passed.

*Intermediate, Part II*.—289 Candidates sat, 51 Passed.

*Final, Part I*.—25 Candidates sat, 18 Passed (1 with Honours, 6 with Merit).

*Final, Part II*.—52 Candidates sat, 25 Passed (1 with Merit).

*Final, Part III*.—32 Candidates sat, 11 Passed.

*Languages*.—85 Candidates sat, 44 Passed (10 with Merit).

1,157 Candidates sat, 339 Passed.

Percentage of Passes, 29 per cent.

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THE HONORARY SECRETARY

**A**T a special meeting of the Council held at Chaucer House, on 7th August, Mr. R. D. Hilton Smith, the Honorary Secretary, formally handed in his resignation from that office. When the members of the Council expressed their great regret, they knew they were voicing the feelings of every member of the Section. Sorry as everyone must be to learn that the Section is in future to be deprived of the services of Mr. Hilton Smith, they will share our Honorary Secretary's pleasure in feeling that elevation to a Chief Librarianship is one of the most pleasant reasons one can imagine for making this step necessary.

Mr. Hilton Smith had hoped to be able to carry on until the end of the year, but unfortunately for us his duties as Borough Librarian of Deptford will not permit this. The Association of Assistant Librarians has been singularly fortunate in its Honorary Secretaries, and it is no mean praise to say of Mr. Hilton Smith that throughout the five years in which he has held office he has more than maintained the high standard of service set by his distinguished predecessors. He took office at a time when the amalgamation of the A.A.L. with the L.A. had just been effected. It was a period of experiment, some difficulty, and considerable activity. Not a little of the successful result of amalgamation is due to the ability and tact of Mr. Hilton Smith. The volume of work assumed such alarming proportions at times that many of us wondered how the Secretary could possibly cope with it. Mr. Smith not only coped with it smoothly and efficiently, but managed to undertake other voluntary activities in addition, without interfering with his normal duties, which were at that time so heavy that most of us would have felt compelled to relinquish voluntary work.

There are some members, perhaps, who do not realize the debt we all owe our honorary officers, and this present opportunity we have of alluding to the loyal services of one of our most distinguished officers serves to remind all, that the Section owes its present status and efficiency mainly to men and women who at considerable personal sacrifice have laboured hard in the interests of assistants.

Needless to say, Mr. Hilton Smith will continue to serve his colleagues. In the complicated negotiations which are now on foot concerning the next step in the history of the A.A.L., he will continue to take a leading part; in

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the general affairs of the L.A. it is hoped that he will continue for many years to come to play his distinguished part.

On behalf of all our members we wish him a happy and outstanding career at Deptford, whose Council we congratulate on a fortunate choice.

We cull the following without permission, but with very grateful acknowledgments, from that unique mirror of American life, the *New Yorker*.

"We've heard a couple of fairly sinister stories about the Public Library. There was the case of a harried and perspiring man, a Mr. McLaughlin, who found himself standing on Forty-second Street, outside the office building at 500 Fifth Avenue, with his arms full of packages, and an important appointment awaiting him inside. He felt that he simply couldn't do justice to his appointment with his arms full (he was carrying, among other things, a portable radio). Suddenly inspired, he crossed the street to the Library, went in by the main entrance, and checked his packages there. He strongly suspected it was against the rules, but he thought he could get around that by strolling down the corridor, then going downstairs and making his exit through the side door on Forty-second Street. It turned out that he had been followed every inch of the way, and when he started to leave the building, an attendant laid a heavy hand on his shoulder and said, 'The checker wants to see you, Jack.' They walked back upstairs to the checkroom, where the checker, with a hard smile, piled all of Mr. Laughlin's things back into his arms. Before he knew it, he was on the street again, as encumbered as ever, and in no frame of mind to keep an appointment. He went home instead, and lay down in a darkened room.

"The other story concerns a man who went into the Library for a quiet half-hour in one of the reading-rooms, and couldn't get out. He was carrying a kennel-supply catalogue which someone had given him, and everybody thought he had stolen it. He had a fierce argument with the young lady in charge of the reading-room. He won it, but was left so weak that when the doorman challenged him, he just handed over the catalogue, and started out empty-handed. The doorman wouldn't let him go, though. If the catalogue was his, he was entitled to have it; if it wasn't, the authorities would have to Take Action. Trembling and miserable, he waited nearly half an hour while the librarians looked in the files for their copy of the catalogue in question. They finally found it, and forgivingly returned the man *his* catalogue, which

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he no longer wanted—wished he'd never seen it, in fact. They made him take it, though, and he went outside and threw it in a trash can."



## BOOKS AND THE PUBLIC LIBRARY<sup>1</sup>

J. P. LAMB

YOU will notice that my title is "Books and the public library" not "Literature and the public library." The choice is deliberate, and gives the key to the views I propose to offer you.

I read in a library journal some time ago the report of a speech which contained the following remarks: "A good book is a permanent possession. Why should we get excited if we do not get a reader to-day? The book is there. It will attract a reader in due course—to-morrow, if not to-morrow, the day after. It is not of the may-fly order, which is born and dead in twenty-four hours; it is a permanent possession which sooner or later will find its reader."

These remarks crystallize the old view of the function of libraries, and you of the new generation must consider whether the philosophy of librarianship on which they are based is tenable under the changed conditions which confront us to-day.

"A good book is a permanent possession." There is truth in that statement when it is applied to the great literature of the world; or to certain great books which are not necessarily literature. I have in mind, when saying this, such books as the recognized county histories, which have been created with such wealth of erudition and research that they form a foundation on which other workers base their labours. They are not literature, but they are certainly source books, and they remain permanent possessions, because the data with which they deal is practically unchangeable. The sources have been fully explored and properly exploited, and there is little or no opportunity for enlargement or alteration.

But if we ask ourselves of how many books this is true (excluding pure literature, which is essentially personal and creative), we find it applies to very few indeed. The fact that any book we may have under consideration is a good book does not really enter into the matter at all. Ideally, of course, all books

<sup>1</sup> A paper given before the A.A.L. at Sheffield.

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in public libraries should be good books; unfortunately, however, very few really good books are written. But the best book on the atomic theory, for example, cannot be a permanent possession, because the pace of research is so rapid that in a few months its theories and discoveries, and the hypotheses based on them, become so much outmoded that it is unwise to issue such a book as a real contribution to thought. This applies to practically all scientific literature. It does not, however, apply to such scientific landmarks as the records of the researches of Darwin, Faraday, Newton, and other great discoverers. Such works become part of the history of science, and considered purely as historical works, are imperishable.

When Professor J. B. S. Haldane was lecturing here last winter, I discussed his books with him. He was not proud of his popular books on science, and told me that he would be surprised if we had in the library the only really good book he had written, *Enzymes*. He said, "If you haven't got it, don't buy it now, because it is completely out of date." That book was published in 1930, and it was bought for the Central in that year. A good book, the standard text for the time, but hardly a permanent possession. In science and technology, in applied art, economics, sociology—indeed, in all books dealing with the application of thought to human affairs and needs—permanency is impossible, because the conditions under which those ideas are applied must inevitably change. Only in the realm of pure thought can this thesis be maintained, and the only books which can be regarded as permanent are those whose literary quality is of such merit that it outweighs the disadvantages of their outmoded ideas and background.

Apart from a comparatively few exceptions of books which have made original contributions to thought in philosophy, religion, and biography, this sweeping statement clearly referred to pure literature, to imaginative and creative books, in which the literary quality is predominant. No other interpretation is tenable. I must assume, then, that the speaker regards a library as primarily a literary institution, using the word literature in the narrow sense. I think it is a great misfortune that so many librarians appear to hold similar views.

Alarming symptoms of this appeared a few years ago in a quarter where one would have least expected it. A group of young assistants dominated THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT and tried to make it a literary journal. They attempted to do what real literary magazines obviously could do much better. They sneered at what they called mechanical librarianship; they laughed loudly and scornfully at issue statistics. They reviewed glowingly the works of modern writers;

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and they expressed their views in tortured and immature English which exhibited symptoms of severe growing pains in the writers. Then they became arty; the malady obviously had to run its usual course. Ridicule was poured on the colourless and vapid bulletins issued by many libraries; and, as a consequence, the ASSISTANT appeared with a bilious green cover which revolted the soul. We were given to understand that literature, and modern literature at that, should be the basic element of the stock of any self-respecting library. And thus we had the spectacle of the youth of the movement joining hands with the older school in advocating a philosophy of librarianship which, as I hope to show, is completely reactionary.

Before I proceed further with this paper, let me make my meaning perfectly clear. I do not want to suggest that a wide knowledge and appreciation of literature are not essential to librarians. On the contrary, I consider that an ability to write well is a very essential part of the equipment of a competent librarian. But there is no more reason why a journal devoted to the interests of librarianship should attempt to become a literary journal than that it should confine itself to economics, sociology, or any other of the important book groups which find a place in a good library. Indeed, the attitude of this group is a clear indication of the need for a restatement of the purpose and function of the public library. This is even more necessary, since the general public appear to hold similar views, and until the true position is made clear the work of the library will be kept within the limits we ourselves have allowed to be set for it.

We suffer, in short, from a conception of the use of books which has little relevance to present-day conditions, and it is instructive to attempt to analyse the reasons which have led to its general acceptance.

Before the ability to decipher print became almost universal, books were produced mainly for scholars whose education at the two then existing universities, the public schools, or the old grammar schools was mainly of the classical type, in which pure literature predominated. Libraries, up to the middle of the nineteenth century, largely consisted of books on the humanities. The well-read man, which of course is synonymous with the term cultured or educated man, was one whose reading and interests were in philosophy, religion, biography, or literature. A tentative literature on mechanical problems began to grow in this century, and a few books on sociology had made spasmodic appearances. Up to about 1830 the word library connoted an attitude of mind which was at once unworldly and unpractical; it was associated with



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the type of training which still dominates our education curriculum and our general educational outlook. Its effect, socially, was to differentiate types, and it persists even to-day. A knowledge of the classical languages, an ability to quote from classical authors in the original to the confusion of the unlettered, was the method by which the gentleman was distinguished from the mere man. It was common in the House of Commons until comparatively recent times, and even to-day we see a fossil survival of this in the strange notion, still held by many people, that while an extensive knowledge of Greek gives its possessor some peculiar and esoteric virtues, an ability to design and make function some incredibly delicate and complicated mechanism is work suitable only for a lower order of mind. In effect, our idea of culture and what is known as education is still based on a mediæval outlook.

The public library, founded under pressure from two emotions which normally are in conflict—idealism and acquisitiveness—naturally moved along similar lines. The idealists, who fought for democratic freedom and realized that democracy was not possible without universal education, believed that they had found the best tool in free libraries. The acquisitive people, reared in an atmosphere of undiluted *laissez-faire* in a rapidly expanding world, where glittering prizes went to the best equipped, took Samuel Smiles to their hearts, and exercised their native ability with the aid of libraries to lift themselves to positions of power on the shoulders of their fellows. Out of this union of conflicting motives the public library was born.

Its foundation coincided with a development in book production which was an inevitable result of the growth of the new social and economic forces which had stirred into feeble life some thirty years earlier. The number of books published on economic and social problems, on science and technology, slowly began to grow. But the dominating idea of the older culture conditioned the development of the library. The co-optive system of the Libraries Acts introduced scholars in the humanities to Library Committees. Even the devotees of Samuel Smiles gave way to them. Inevitably, therefore, though the conditions were slowly changing, the book stocks of libraries expressed the inhibitions of their governors. The great public Reference Libraries were created in this manner; they were modelled on those of the universities and private scholars. They were, and remain to-day, so far as their basic stocks are concerned, pre-eminently libraries for scholars in the humanities. And when at a later date lending libraries began to appear, they were stocked on somewhat similar lines. The first librarians were therefore caretakers of books which were carefully

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selected for them by cultured gentlemen to list, arrange, and keep clean. A book in those days was a permanent possession, even when it became a positive menace to health. And it is some measure of the inability of librarians to face the possibilities of their own work that even to-day there is a general failure to realize that the stock of any properly conducted lending library is not only impermanent, but requires almost complete renewal in a few years.

The slow trickle of books on sociology, economics, science, technology, and other practical subjects has grown to-day into a mighty flood. New researches and new conditions have produced new literatures. Consider, for example, the vast literature on world problems; and contemplate—if you can with equanimity—the outpouring of statistical and other records by the League of Nations alone. Take the work of the Technical societies, and assimilate the fact that no less than 750,000 articles appear in technical periodical journals each year. Even the expert research worker is unable to cope with them, and staffs of indexers are at work, classifying, selecting, and abstracting for him. Can anyone, in face of such facts, still talk glibly of books as permanent possessions, and think of libraries as being concerned primarily with the humanities?

And if librarians themselves retain this limited view of their work, is it any wonder that the general public, on whose real understanding of our work depends its success or failure, follow their lead? When a certain public representative suggested that, in order to save expenditure on the book fund, people should read the same books again, his views were very properly received with shouts of laughter by librarians assembled in Conference. But this particular public representative was merely giving practical expression to the ideas implicit in the utterances of many public librarians, and to the general policy of the movement. It would perhaps be excusable if anyone who heard the remarks I first quoted to you went back to his Library Committee and argued that the book fund should be reduced, since a library of permanent possessions in the form of thousands of good books was already available for readers. Most of you will agree that the majority of people outside libraries imagine that a library, once created, will last for a very long time. The only factor considered in stock was physical wear; datal wear—the outmoding of ideas, the additions to factual knowledge, the progress of discovery and research was rarely considered until comparatively recently. Indeed, the old methods yet prevail in many libraries, and the stock phrase “cemeteries of books” still has meaning. Only recently in a branch children’s library of a certain large

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system there was a section labelled "Use these for homework," containing books on general science dated 1880 to 1890.

The public, then, is not to blame for accepting us at our own valuation. It is also clear that whatever missionary efforts we are to adopt shall be directed first of all to our own profession. And one of the first steps we must take to instil a right conception of the use of books, in librarians and public alike, is to break away from museum librarianship. The large cities offer what may be called a Metropolitan service to surrounding populations, from which, indeed, they draw much of their wealth. In such cities it is reasonable to offer a wide book service, though even this is becoming less necessary since the establishment of the National Central Library, the regional library schemes, and the libraries of the new universities. But it is difficult to imagine any library argument for the collection of museum pieces in literature even in these cities. It is true that a great reference library is an excellent advertising medium; its mere size, and the number of books, are impressive to small minds. But if it passes beyond a reasonable minimum of essential books its real library value is exceedingly doubtful. The bibliographical exhibition piece is also useful for propaganda purposes; it appeals to one of the most primitive of human instincts, the use of the visual sense.

But we, as librarians, are surely giving a different message. We are urging the use of books for learning, for the right type of education—the broadening and instructing of minds; and the most exquisite aquatint or the most skilful and artistic binding are not sufficient for that. The mere act of collecting books, the mere size of stock, are no guide to the quality of any library outside the National collecting library, the British Museum. Our job, in a librarian's excellent phrase, is to make books productive. Anyone can collect books; it is a librarian's job to select them. And it is with the selection and functioning of books—the creation of the organization, the adjustment of the ever-changing means of service to the changing needs of readers, the changing qualities of books, and the changing intellectual equipment of the times—that the librarian's real job is concerned.

We public librarians must first of all realize that our work has very little in common with that of such libraries as the British Museum. There is a whole technique of administration—I use the word in a broad sense—in public libraries which is outside the needs of those libraries which deal primarily with scholars. The public library has no carefully selected public: a public sorted by that most efficient of all sieves, intellectual interest. Our public is the

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world of men, women, and children, of all ages, in all stages of mental development, and with all types of social and intellectual equipment and inhibitions. Yet in our professional training methods and our general outlook we habitually ignore this essential fact. Our examination syllabus, our professional periodicals, our text-books, and our official outlook are largely dominated by this type of library mind. Even the L.A. Headquarters building bears the permanent seal of this in its name—Chaucer House. The time has come to break with it, and to reconsider our present position and our objectives.

First of all, let us be quite clear what we mean by objectives. In this democratic age we are apt to be misled by nebulous phrases, because the one common attribute of the mind of low calibre is its tendency to idealize things it does not understand. And since it understands little, it has an infinite capacity for worship, and since it has also an instructive distrust of reason, its gods usually have feet of clay.

I do not propose, therefore, to put a vague ideal before you, but rather to examine briefly the factors which set definite limits to our work. It seems to me quite clear that the library is, and to some extent always must be, a secondary agent, and in order fully to understand our function, it is necessary to see what results have been, or probably will be, achieved by formal education, which is easily the most important of the many activities whose work influences ours.

It is, of course, quite impossible for me to attempt to enter fully into the relationship between libraries and formal education; I merely want to point out some very obvious things. It is probable that if we lived in a world from which economic fear was removed, and in which the general body of people were born with a much higher standard of mental capacity than at present, the library would become the most potent of all educational forces. This is, of course, clear, because all men of high intelligence are book men. They must be. It is the one inescapable fact.

But our world is not such a world. The vast majority of people to-day are almost wholly concerned with one thing: to acquire sufficient skill or training to make it possible for them to secure a competent livelihood, to breed and live in comparative peace, comfort, and security, and in general, to exercise what have been described—wrongly, I think—as the normal human virtues.

Because of this, formal education is less concerned with the stimulation of intelligence than with the formation of habit and the guidance of conduct. These are very estimable things; very necessary things. We cannot but have a

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wholesome respect for the ability of the educational system to instruct our people in them efficiently and adequately. Indeed, it is probable in years to come that training in these, and vocational instruction, will be the predominant part of education. That appears to be an inevitable development if the present economic system survives.

Now it is clear that our work, if concerned with vocational training (for it can scarcely enter into the other factors, habit and conduct), must be secondary to the work of the school or the tutor. Books are a valuable tool, but only a tool.

Again, still assuming that our economic system survives, in spite of its shrinking profit surplus for social needs and its insistence on the virtue and necessity of working to live, in a world rapidly becoming less able to maintain this theory, we must face the fact that the number of people of high intelligence is limited—first, by biological laws the control of which still escapes us, and secondly, by reason of the fact that we as a nation exploit all our assets except the most vital one of all—brains. And mainly because of these two things we might perhaps be permitted to doubt if the educational system, though it undoubtedly affects our work, affects it in the right way.

Tuition means, in the case of the vast majority, acceptance; it means the mere acquisition of fact. And knowledge, in the factual sense, is useless if the mind has not the capacity to assess it, to classify it, and to apply it. We are inclined, at the present time, to base much of our system of education and the vocational training for the professions (including our own) on the ability of the student to accept and remember fact. To those of us who believe that it is only possible to organize a modern State on the basis of responsible individuality, there are grave dangers in this.

The trends to-day are unmistakable. We see on all sides a definite move to authoritarianism. States are suppressing political individuality; newspapers and poor books are preventing the growth of intellectual individuality; and the radio is the last and most dangerous innovation in this levelling out of the man who, in the good old phrase, had a mind of his own.

In this our world, then, our primary duty is the creation of individuality. We appreciate, I think, that the number of people with an inborn capacity for original thinking is extremely small. Many of these are unable to climb over the barriers erected by social conditions and economic forces. But if the capacity is there, it is always there. It can be stimulated. It is our job—nay, our duty as intelligent leaders of thought—to stimulate it.

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Those people who talk about "permanent possessions" would have you believe that the only way to do this is to make people literary minded. It is no more possible, even if it were desirable, to make all people literary minded, than it is to make them musically or artistically minded. I refuse to accept the doctrine that a man who can use his mind intelligently on town planning, for example, is less useful to the community, or less capable of applying his mind with equal success to other tasks, than an English scholar. Our system of education, handicapped as it is to-day by its inability to offer equal opportunity, cannot sort out these people for us. They come to us in a mass. Some do not come at all. But the gift of intellectual curiosity is dormant in a select, indistinguishable few. A chance book, a chance conversation, a chance phrase in a public address—any of these may provide the stimulant to set the mind moving. And that mind, once moved, is as likely to move to science or sociology or economics as to the humanities. The important thing is that it does move, and that we should provide the means of increasing both its momentum and its range.

Here, then, is the justification of the policy of the library which plans its work to bring all within its doors, and selects its stock with some regard to the mental equipment of its potential readers. The librarian of a library so organized would not limit his choice to books regarded by some as permanent possessions, but would balance the stock scientifically to meet the greatest incidence of intelligent book demand, because he would always have in mind the fact that intelligence can show itself in many ways. He would not, I hope, fold his arms in philosophic detachment and wait for the reader who might want to read one of these books to-morrow; he would use the book as a purposive instrument, and link his work with all forms of intellectual activity, and with all groups of people who are seeking to develop their minds. He would consider it as good a contribution to the social well-being to mould the mind and add to the background of a worker in monetary theory as to welcome a reader who found pleasure in sniggering over the footnotes of Gibbon.

If the library is to create individuality of thought, it must retain its own individuality. There are signs that it may lose this. I have noticed with concern that some irresponsible young people in our movement are seriously discussing Government inspection of libraries through a separate library department of the Board of Education. The bait offered is the suggestion that their conditions would be much improved in such an event, and it is so succulent a morsel that they fail to see the barbed hook of complete absorption, with all its

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implications of graduate Trade Unionism, beneath. I forbear to quote the story of the young lady of Riga, since you all know it, but I would ask you to recall that on that occasion a very estimable and doubtless attractive young lady came to a sticky end. I tremble for the future of our present generation of librarians, no less than for the future of our mission—which is, to undertake the real work of education—should such a disaster befall us.

Our own work lies clearly before us. We live in an age when exciting and profound changes are in progress. The efficient library has on its shelves books by men and women who are helping to interpret and develop the social evolution which is steadily following its inevitable course. It is our job to make those books reach and influence as many minds as possible, and above all, to see that first of all they help to mould our own.



"DEAR AL"

HAROLD F. BRIGHAM

DEAR AL,—

You will not mind if I call you Al. It will help me to be informal and personal as friend to friend. You may feel that this is "just like an American," and I will not mind. I have had a long and ardent debate with myself on the question—"Resolved, that *anything* is better than Al," but Al persists, and Al it shall be, to help me visualize a personality in the assistant librarian to whom I shall write my letter.

Your friendly "Hon. Ed." invites me to write you a series of letters. This sample may or may not meet expectations, but, regardless of this, I am wondering if the series may not turn out a still-birth. Amalgamation of the A.A.L. and the L.A. appears to be imminent, and I would judge THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT to be subject to some change as a result. We will have to await developments.

Perhaps I should say something about myself by way of introduction. I am librarian of the Louisville, Kentucky, Free Public Library. My head is not the least bald. I was born and raised in the East (New Jersey); held one position in the Middle West (Chicago), identified with the headquarters of the American Library Association; and have been for the past eight years in the South (Nashville, Tennessee, and now Louisville). My professional training was taken in the Library School of the New York Public Library.

Louisville, by the way, is the home of the famous "Derby" at "Churchill

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Downs," an annual event of national prominence which glorifies a favourite sport of England.

Your journal, *THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT*, is an excellent publication, and quite unusual to an American librarian. We have no publication addressed specifically to junior librarians. I have studied all the issues of the past year quite carefully. It was received regularly in the Louisville Library before there was the slightest suspicion that I might have a personal identity with it; our library subscribed to it originally on the personal recommendation of a New York City librarian, who appreciated *THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT* on its own merits.

My examination of the back file for the past year has been most enlightening. Your distinction of "assistants" from "chiefs" is more deliberate than anything of the sort that could be recognized in this country, if I have grasped aright the English signification of the term. We have "chiefs," to be sure, in the form of administrative heads of libraries, and we recognize other librarians who occupy administrative positions, such as Department Heads and Branch Librarians, in much the same general category with chiefs, and we tend to throw all others into the category of Assistants, usually grading or classifying these to distinguish Seniors from Juniors. Of course, the size of libraries colours this picture. A Department Head in a very large library is generally thought to outrank the Librarian, or "chief," of a smaller library. In like manner a Librarian of a very small library is apt to be rated ordinarily no higher than an Assistant in a larger library, especially as so many Librarians in very small libraries work on part-time schedules (their libraries being open only part-time), and so many of them have little or no recognized professional training. Perhaps your practice is not greatly different from ours.

The fact is, classification and grading of library staffs is only beginning to be realized in this country. A few large libraries have well elaborated schemes, but most libraries have not, and we find many thoroughly trained professional librarians doing clerical and semi-professional jobs of all kinds which properly should be delegated to a sub-professional class of employees; largely clerks. There is a strong movement in the direction of better classification and grading of library staffs.

We have no association of assistant librarians, nor a section within the American Library Association for junior members of the profession. Yet there has long been a felt need for the latter at least. The Juniors have felt they had no voice and little recognition, and with much justification, too.



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Their elders have become increasingly aware of the neglect. The result has been the organization recently, within the A.L.A., of a Junior Members' Round Table which is functioning very effectively, giving Juniors an opportunity to express themselves and to take an active part in the work of the Association. Many admirable accomplishments have been achieved by the Juniors. This Round Table hardly seems adequate up to the present time, but it does seem to be a step in the right direction.

Your system of correspondence courses and Association Examinations is unknown to America. Correspondence courses never have developed here, although there always have been and there still are a few available. The principal emphasis in this country has been placed on "accredited" training, and this training has become concentrated more and more in the degree-conferring colleges and universities. The whole question of sub-professional training is being actively studied at the present time. Good *professional* training is considered to be at least one year of library training in an accredited library school with a college degree (sixteen years of academic schooling, including four years of college) as pre-requisite. The questions now being studied are: What training below the full professional level is really needed? What kinds of training can be set up to meet these needs? What recognition can be given to such training without lowering the standards of professional work or confusing professional and sub-professional training?

You will recognize the relation of this problem of training to the problem of classifying and grading staff referred to above.

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT carried a news item recently which would be striking to any American librarian. Reference was made to a census of 1931 which indicated an alarming (?) increase in the number of women librarians, and showed that for the first time the women outnumbered the men. In this country the women have outnumbered the men perhaps from the beginning of library development, certainly from the beginning of public library development. This situation has been traditional, just as the opposite situation has apparently been the tradition in England. The explanation probably is that early librarianship in this country offered small opportunity and still smaller reward. Its development as a recognized profession is a distinctly modern phenomenon, all of this taking place within the life-time of the older librarians living to-day. This development has resulted in a significant increase in the number of men librarians in recent years. This increase, I am sure, will be found to apply also to the percentage of men as compared to women. How-

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ever, I would estimate that more than 90 per cent. of American librarians are women, whereas the English equivalent would probably be about 60 per cent.

Your area plan of association organization is bound to excite the admiration of your American cousins. Distances in this country are very great, as you know. We have only one annual convention of the A.L.A. This year it was in the West, at Denver, Colorado; last year it was in your own sister country, that is, at Montreal; next year it will be in the South, at Richmond, Virginia. Each year distance alone prevents large numbers from attending their major library conference. The Association does have a second annual conference, called the Mid-year meeting, but it is always held in the headquarters city, Chicago, and it is designed primarily as an official business conference of special interest to "chiefs" in the broader sense which I indicated earlier. The only local meetings which most librarians, particularly Juniors, have within close range, are what we call State meetings. These are meetings of the librarians of a given State, each State having its own State library association. State associations are nominally affiliated with the A.L.A., but they are independent of it and distinctly local in character. We have several regional library associations bearing the same nominal relation to the A.L.A.; for example, the South-eastern Library Association, and the Pacific North-west Library Association. But these attract small numbers, practically no Juniors at all, and distance imposes the same prohibitions here too.

Your plan of Area Meetings seems to overcome this weakness in the American scheme. All of your librarians apparently have a major conference of national significance within relatively easy reach.

Let me mention briefly three additional observations suggested by my recent communion with THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT. I was struck by the obvious relish you have for debates in your conferences, and also by your spirit of fun. I had to chuckle, for example, when I read "Resolved: That librarians should marry librarians." I was impressed with the prominence given to distinctly literary subjects in your conference programmes; we are given more to the serious discussion of services and methods and problems of administration. I was intrigued by your emphasis of social occasions in your meetings; we have social occasions, too, of course, but they seem to be more formal, less consequential, and lacking in the spontaneity which appears to characterize your occasions of this kind.

This letter, already overgrown, was originally intended to convey the chief

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library news of the day, namely, the high spots of the Annual Conference of the American Library Association, which was held in Denver, Colorado, last month. It has turned out to be almost everything else. Still, I ought to mention the Conference; it was very successful and most delightful.

To go to Denver is to realize the vast spread of territory that lies west of the Mississippi River, whole States, with practically no large cities, but endless plains of grasslands largely void of trees. Very few Americans living in the East have a true conception of their own West. Library development in this western area is naturally limited and handicapped.

Denver itself is a large city (over 250,000) located at the base of the Rocky Mountains. Its altitude is 5,000 feet above sea-level, and it is in close view of countless peaks, many of them approximately 10,000 feet still higher than Denver. The very recollection of such magnificent scenery makes mere conference topics quite uninspiring.

I will mention only two of these topics, and then beat a hasty retreat.

The principal business before the entire Conference had to do with a movement to secure aid from the National Government for the extension and improvement of library service throughout the country. The aid sought was of two kinds; first, a Federal Library Agency to be established at Washington to serve as a library information centre and intelligence bureau; and, second, a large annual appropriation of money to be distributed among the States for library aid on a basis of population and need.

The legislative body, or Council, of the A.L.A. had previously approved this entire proposal, in Montreal last year. But some of our more conservative colleagues later conceived a violent objection to Federal Aid. At any rate, two months before the Denver Conference, the serenity of librarians' offices all over the country was rudely disturbed by the appearance of a circular letter condemning the whole idea of Federal participation in library service, in language which I thought appealed less to reason than passion. A card was enclosed inviting all who held the same views to rally to the aid of taxpayers and self-respecting local governments, sending their names as petitioners to call on the Council of the Association at Denver to rescind its action taken at Montreal.

I honestly thought only several hundred names might be obtained at most, but you can imagine the consternation which resulted when the petition was presented bearing 2,300 names! The meeting of Council was anticipated with

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fear by some, but with relish by those who delighted in combats of wit and oratory. (By the way, good oratory is more noticeable by its absence at American library gatherings.)

These anticipations were both to be surprised with disappointment. The Council meeting developed no fears and only the faintest degree of combat. The leaders of the opposing forces had successfully arbitrated their differences before the meeting. It was agreed on both sides to endorse the proposal to establish a Federal Library Agency in Washington, but to postpone further agitation to obtain a Federal appropriation of money until this whole matter could be studied and reported back to the Council next year. That is the action which was taken. The friends of Federal aid were satisfied because, they reasoned, no funds could be administered and distributed until there was a Federal Agency established to exercise this large responsibility, and it would require at least a year to obtain Congressional action on the Federal Agency proposal. Additional satisfaction was found in the fact that the foes of Federal Aid made no demand to rescind last year's action endorsing both Federal Agency and Federal financial aid.

My own position in the controversy must be clearly indicated already. I am convinced that Federal participation in library service, as in all other essential public services, is the trend of the times in this country, and is inevitable. The trend in the collection and distribution of taxes is also in the same direction, that is, away from the smaller units of government to the larger, namely, State and National Government.

Your own Great Britain offers one of the most convincing arguments and examples in support of "Federal Aid." Your development of rural service and of county libraries has outstripped ours in recent years. In this, your country has assumed the position of leadership which our country only a few years ago felt she had won. Your achievement is due to National support for libraries. Our immediate past-President, Charles H. Compton, made this declaration before the General Assembly at the Denver Conference, as a result of his visit to England just preceding the Conference. Needless to say, it made a deep impression. The example of Great Britain ought to help the friends of Federal Aid for libraries in their fight in America.

I will barely mention the second convention topic I had in mind. It relates to the centennial of the birth of Andrew Carnegie, which will be celebrated this year on both sides of the Atlantic. Our Conference paid tribute to the greatest benefactor of libraries in a special meeting, which was

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most impressive and inspiring. We are very proud of this saintly philanthropist of yesteryear.

"And so to bed. . . ."

Your friend,

HAL

(HAROLD F. BRIGHAM.)

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY.

30th July, 1935.

## CORRESPONDENCE

EDINBURGH PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

27th July, 1935.

The Editor,

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

Sir,—

It cannot be too widely known that a statement in the leading article of the *Record* for July (p. 256) is misleading, if not quite incorrect. This article states that the L.A.—the Council is meant—has considered the question of the relations between the Board and public libraries, and that only a year ago the Council adopted a recommendation "that the time was not ripe for action to be taken or even for a general enquiry to be initiated by the Council." The article goes on to say "this is no evasion but a real verdict."

Now the facts are as follows: a sub-committee to consider the question of inspection was set up on 7th December, 1933. It met eight months later, on 10th September, 1934, on the Monday of the Conference week, when five members were present, and sat for about three-quarters of an hour. It held no other meeting, but sent to the Council the recommendation quoted above. The Council adopted this recommendation without debate. As this small sub-committee was appointed to consider inspection, and as it held only one short meeting, can it be said that they gave anything like adequate consideration to this big question? I have spoken to a number of councillors, and they cannot remember any debate taking place on the general relations between the Board and public libraries. In 1934 the question was evaded.

What happened in 1934, however, does not matter now; then it may have been wise to shelve a difficult question. But in 1935 the state of affairs is different, because the Carnegie Trustees have brought the question to the front in their report. My point is that the Council must now consider the whole matter thoroughly: if they want transfer they must work for it; if they

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do not, they must be prepared to fight it. Remember that the Kenyon Committee was set up without the advice and without the knowledge of the Council as a body.

Yours faithfully,  
ERNEST A. SAVAGE.

## THE DIVISIONS

### NORTH-WESTERN DIVISION

**A**BOUT 80 members and friends attended the Summer Meeting, held at Fleetwood on Wednesday, 26th June, in the Derby Room, North Euston Hotel.

The Deputy Mayor (Alderman C. Saer) offered a welcome to the delegates, and was supported by the Chairman of the Fleetwood Public Library Committee (Councillor A. L. Scholfield, B.Sc.)

In a paper on "The New social order and the library," delivered by Councillor Scholfield, he said that the importance of the public library could not be too much emphasized, both as an adjunct to the ordinary educational courses of schools and as a means of self-education and culture. It was one of our social amenities, helping towards that equality of opportunity so necessary for the satisfaction of the individual and the ordered progress of society. The public library, he said, had not yet fulfilled its highest destiny. It was necessary, thought the speaker, for the public library to forsake its negative passive attitude, and take up a positive attitude towards all questions affecting the social life of the people.

A discussion on the proposed amendments to the Library Association Constitution was introduced by Mr. A. J. Hawkes, F.S.A.

Tea was partaken, by kind invitation of his Worship the Mayor of Fleetwood.

### SOUTH-WESTERN DIVISION

The last meeting of the Division was held at Bournemouth on Thursday, 6th June. Members from Portsmouth, Southampton, Winchester, Eastleigh, and Poole, were met by the local members at the Central Library. Unfortunately, the afternoon programme, which consisted of various outdoor tours, had to be cancelled owing to the weather, and substituted by a visit to the Russell Coates Art Gallery and the British Electrical Convention's Exhibition at the Winter Gardens.

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The party was conducted round the Art Gallery by Mr. D. S. Young, the Borough Librarian, special interest being shown by the members in the Irving Room, which contained the costumes and stage props of the late Sir Henry Irving.

At the Winter Gardens the party split up so that they could inspect the different stands at their leisure. These included every electrical appliance, from switches to cookers and wireless sets.

By kind invitation of the Borough Librarian and his Staff, tea was provided at the East Beach Café.

The general meeting took place in the John B. M. Camm Music Library, when Mr. Olle of Portsmouth read an interesting paper entitled "Books and borrowers," which was in the form of a diary of a junior junior. Mr. D. S. Young closed the meeting by thanking all members for their support, and invited the Division to visit Bournemouth again for a future meeting.

## NEW MEMBERS

**CENTRAL.**—Miss G. H. Baker, Miss K. Turner (Hendon); G. Barnes (Newark); K. Maclean Kemshead (Wimbledon); Marjorie M. Kirby (Croydon); Miss J. Knight (Notts County, Newark); Miss M. R. Waters (Essex County, Romford); W. G. Watts (Gravesend); E. M. Wright (East Ham).

**Midland.**—R. F. Miner (Walsall).

**North-western.**—Miss J. M. Higgenbottom (Manchester); Thomas Noble (Salford).

**South Wales.**—Robert G. Ellis (Cardigan County, Aberystwyth); Miss H. M. Harvey (National Library of Wales).

**South-western.**—Gordon H. Humby (Southampton); Philip Stockwell (Shirley Branch, Southampton).

**Yorkshire.**—Eveline M. Hinchley (Shipley).

**RESIGNATIONS.**—Miss E. J. Parry (Essex County, Romford); Miss E. M. Till (Ipswich).

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